

George P. Wang  
University of Connecticut  
SB 966  
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
March 12, 2015 Public Hearing

I could make this testimony just about numbers. I could just tell you that 1 in 5 women are sexually assaulted. I could just tell you that 80% of female victims report being sexually assaulted before they turn 25: that the majority of sexual assault victims are between the ages of 16 and 24, meaning that college students are particularly vulnerable. Listing these statistics could be all that I do here. Instead, however, I would like to make this testimony more than just numbers: I want to make people more than “statistics.”

In September 2014, Suze Cayer, a student at UConn gave the following speech:

“America, tell me that I should shut my mouth because I am one of the 17.7 million women, because I am three times more likely to suffer from depression, six times more likely to suffer from PTSD, and four times more likely to contemplate suicide. Because my rapist’s reason was ‘you’re too sexy to stop’, because my rapist locked the door, repeatedly shoved me down and ripped my clothes off again and again, every time I tried to escape. Because I never thought to report, like the 60% of victims who don’t report their assaults, because when I wanted to report, I didn’t know where to go, because no one would support me, because of the 40% of assaults that are actually reported, only 10% lead to an arrest, 8% are prosecuted, 4% lead to a felony conviction, and only 3% of rapists will spend a day in jail. America, ask me what was I wearing, ask me what I did, ask me why I didn’t go to the police immediately, ask me right after it happened when it felt like there was nothing left inside but shame and flashbacks, ask me when I felt stripped of dignity or when I spent an hour shaking in the shower scrubbing every skin cell on my body but still feeling dirty, or when I spent hours in a friend’s arm while I searched for that silver lining to make life seem good again. So I ask you America, when are you going to stand with your daughters and sons?”

Suze was one of the victims that did not report his/her assault until it was too late. The majority of victims will not report sexual assault. According to Justice Department, 68% of sexual assaults will go unreported. Allow me describe part of the reason why. Driving to Windham Hospital, the closest hospital to campus that hosts SAFE nurses, is a 20 minute drive. I personally have driven many friends and classmates to Windham Hospital. It’s a long drive, with winding roads and far too many opportunities to think about what has happened. Often victims cannot bring their friends for comfort, because the shuttle that runs between Windham Hospital and UConn only transports patients and victims. Widespread rumors that both the shuttle/ambulance and hospital are associated with large fee bills further dissuade victims from wanting to get a SAFE kit administered. Having heard everything that I’ve just said, can you understand why one of our biggest problems with sexual assault is the number of incidents that go unreported? I urge you all to remember that for many, these words are not just descriptions of a situation. They are a reality. As a result, few students are able to get the privilege of justice.

Victims typically have a three day window in which they get have a SAFE kit administered. If they miss this window, because they are hesitant or afraid because of all of the above...they cannot get a SAFE kit, rendering a criminal trial almost pointless. Students may turn to the Office of Diversity and Equity and file a Title IX complaint – but many students will not be able to find justice here, because their assailant was an alumni or someone visiting campus: a situation that Suze (from above) found herself in.

I could just tell you that allowing the University Infirmary to host SAFE nurses also sends a message: that the University of Connecticut, the state's flagship university, is dedicated to preventing sexual assault and supporting victims however possible. That it allows universities around the State to be united in saying the same. I, however, want to make this more about the people. I ask that you all think of victims when someone talks about statistics: that you think about people, like Suze, when you hear the word victim: that you realize this is not an isolated problem. I want you to realize that sexual assault is an issue affecting our friends and our families. I want you to realize that justice should not be a privilege. I want you to empathize with our cause, because it is also your cause. It is all of our causes.

Thank you.